

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Summer Food Service Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks served in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) SFSP meal patterns require a 2-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch and supper. The meat/meat alternates component is optional at breakfast. A 1-ounce serving of meat/meat alternates component may be offered as one of the two required snack components. For information on the SFSP meal patterns and the meat/meat alternates component, review the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resource, [Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the SFSP Meal Patterns](#), and visit the "SFSP Meal Patterns" and "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP" sections of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.



Nuts, seeds, and their butters credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the SFSP meal patterns. Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit.

Roasted or dried soy beans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soy beans (edamame) credit only as the vegetables/fruits component.

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nuts and seeds in CACFP menus. This consideration is also important for children with a disability that requires dietary restrictions. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to these individuals are in a prepared food, and are ground or finely chopped. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Lunch and Supper

The SFSP lunch and supper meal pattern requires 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half (1 ounce) of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch and supper. Menu planners must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement. For example, a lunch that contains 1 ounce of peanuts must include 1 ounce of another meat/meat alternate, such as ½ cup of yogurt, 1 ounce of lean meat or cheese, ¼ cup of cottage cheese, ¼ cup of cooked dried beans and peas (legumes), or one-quarter of a large egg.

Snack

SFSP sponsors may serve the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) as one of the two required snack components. Nuts and seeds may credit as the full 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component at snack.

Crediting Nut and Seed Butters

Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter credits if it meets the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nut or seed butters in SFSP menus. Use only creamy peanut butter (not chunky) and spread thinly to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



The required serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons of a nut or seed butter credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Table 1 shows the meat/meat alternates contribution for different serving sizes of nut and seed butters.

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Table 1. Meat/meat alternates contribution of nut and seed butters

Meal pattern serving of meat/meat alternates ¹	Tablespoons ¹	Scoop (disher) size ²	Weight equivalent ³
¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)	½	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	0.275 ounces
½ ounce	1	Closest is No. 60 (¾ teaspoons)	0.55 ounces
¾ ounce	1½	Closest is No. 40 (1⅓ tablespoons)	0.825 ounces
1 ounce	2	No. 30 (2 tablespoons)	1.1 ounces
1½ ounces	3	Closest is No. 20 (3⅓ tablespoons)	1.65 ounces
2 ounces	4	No. 16 (¼ cup)	1.2 ounces
¹ One tablespoon equals 3 teaspoons. ² Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) <i>Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster</i> . ³ Weight equivalents are from the USDA's <i>Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs</i> .			

A 1-ounce serving (weight) of a nut or seed butter does not provide 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. To portion nut and seed butters by weight, food service staff must use the appropriate weight conversion listed in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). The FBG indicates that a serving of a nut or seed butter must weigh 1.1 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

Considerations for serving size

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for nut and seed butters. It may be unreasonable to provide the full-required serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich. For example, the SFSP lunch and supper meal pattern requires 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) of peanut butter to provide 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. This is a large amount for two slices of bread.



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For lunch and supper, the CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another meat/meat alternate to provide the full-required serving. For example, a lunch menu could provide 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component from a sandwich made with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce of meat/meat alternates) served with ½ cup of yogurt (1 ounce of meat/meat alternates). Another option is providing the required 4 tablespoons of peanut butter in three half-sandwiches that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter.

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters are choking hazards. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nuts, seeds, and peanut butter in preschool menus. This consideration is also important for children with a disability that requires dietary restrictions.

Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include grinding or finely chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds before adding to prepared foods; and using only creamy nut or seed butters and spreading them thinly on other foods such as toast and crackers. For additional guidance, visit the “[Choking Prevention](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the SFSP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/AcceptDocumentationSFSP.pdf>

Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (ICN):

<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/>

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CNlabel.pdf>

Choking Prevention (CSDE’s Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Crediting Foods in the SFSP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for the SFSP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program#MealPatterns>

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Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/ComponentMMASFSP.pdf>

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>

Nutrition Guide: Summer Food Service Program (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/USDA_SFSP_NutritionGuide.pdf

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Document_Meat_Meat_Alternate.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents#MMA>

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/stdrecipeschools.doc>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

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For more information, visit the [SFSP Meal Patterns](#) and [Crediting Foods in the SFSP](#) sections of the CSDE's SFSP webpage, or contact the [Summer Meals staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/CreditNutsSFSP.pdf>.

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- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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